New York Theatre Critics' Reviews 1948

Volume IX, Number 2 • Rachel W. Coffin, *Editor* • Week of February 2, 1948

1948 PRODUCTIONS

Premieres in Other Years
Original Reviews Appeared in These Volumes

1947 Vol.

Stage Play	*Page*
*Allegro	300
*Angel in the Wings	238
*Antony and Cleopatra	255
*Brigadoon	427
*Command Decision	328
*Cradle Will Rock (The)	229
*Crime and Punishment	233
*Finian's Rainbow	486
*For Love or Money	271
*Heiress (The)	335
*High Button Shoes	304
Inspector Calls (An)	291
*John Loves Mary	465
*Man and Superman	308
*Medea	295
Mikado (The)	222
Music In My Heart	324
*Streetcar Named Desire (A)	249
*Winslow Boy (The)	283
*Young Man's Fancy (A)	383

1946 Vol.

*Annie Get Your Gun	382
*Born Yesterday	466
Burlesque	208
Call Me Mister	403
*Happy Birthday	280

1944 Vol.

*Harvey	95

1943 Vol.

*Oklahoma	341
Voice of the Turtle (The)	199

Asterisks indicate shows scheduled to play week of February 2, 1948

1948 PRODUCTIONS

Premieres During 1948
Reviews Appear in This Volume

Stage Play	*Page*
Cox and Box	378
Gondoliers (The)	371
H.M.S. Pinafore	378
Harvest of Years	394
Iolanthe	397
Last Dance (The)	367
*Look, Ma, I'm Dancin'!	364
*Make Mine Manhattan	382
Men We Marry (The)	379
Pirates of Penzance	399
*Power Without Glory	390
*Strange Bedfellows	386
Survivors (The)	374
Trial by Jury	399

THEATRE OPENINGS
"The Gondoliers"
"The Last Dance"
"Look Ma, I'm Dancin'!"

Asterisks indicate shows scheduled to play week of February 2, 1948

Theatre Critics Reviews brings you each week the complete reviews as they originally appeared in these New York newspapers

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN — NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS — NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
NEW YORK MIRROR — NEW YORK NEWSPAPER PM
NEW YORK SUN — NEW YORK POST — NEW YORK TIMES

All Reviews reproduced by permission.

Published by CRITICS' THEATRE REVIEWS, INC.
235 East 22nd Street New York 10, N. Y.
Yearly Subscription $25.00

Published by Critics' Theatre Reviews, Inc., 235 East 22nd Street, New York 10, N. Y.

"Look, Ma, I'm Dancin'!"

Daily Mirror

JANUARY 30, 1948

'Ma, I'm Dancin'!' Is Hit Musical

By ROBERT COLEMAN

Rack up another hit for George Abbott. Titled "Look, Ma, I'm Dancin'!", it should be tenanting the Adelphi Theatre for a long time to come. Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee fashioned the book from an idea by Jerome Robbins, and Hugh Martin supplied a catchy score.

The new musical kids the tights off ballet. Its hero is a priggish young fellow who hates the classics and wants to do choreography with a modern zing. He gets his chance and, when it looks as though he has flopped, he blames the dancers. And when his novelty wins rave notices, he takes all the bows.

Even the sweet little ballerina who has been mooning over him finally concludes that he's a huge hunk of heel. Chastened by the reaction of his associates, the lout learns the value of modesty and good fellowship. He also gets girl, after nearly losing her, while partnering her in a classic, "Swan Lake."

Harold Lang, like Robbins an alumnus of Ballet Theatre, is excellent as the egotistical lad who has to be taught to be a nice guy. He not only runs the gamut of dance styles, but acts and sings amazingly well for a danseur. Janet Reed plays and steps the role of his sweetie-pie most attractively.

Now the backer of this phony Russian ballet troupe is the hard boiled heiress to a beer fortune. She is what they call around the Adelphi, "a malaped," or fake hoofer. Tiring of backing the company without getting her name in lights or programmed prominently, she turns on the impresario and takes matters into her own hands.

This is a role tailored to order for Nancy Walker and that's just who Abbott has been fortunate enough to land for the part. She's **terrific. A one woman show all by herself. We doubt that any musical comedy star has ever worked harder to help make a hit and her comedy labors pay off handsomely.**

Dead-panned, cynical big-hearted, Nancy's Lily Malloy is a hilarious satiric gem. To revert to the parlance of the good old days of the Palace, Nancy rocks 'em. She had the first nighters roaring like one of those March gales that's on the way.

Robbins' choreography burlesques dancing of every variety: **soft-shoe, buck and wing, steps-and-snappy-cracks, folk and long-hair. It is immensely amusing, though a little more subtlety might have transformed the burlesque into genuine satire.**

Others in the large cast meriting appreciative salutes are Loren Welch, Don Liberto, Alice Pearce, Tommy Rall, Virginia Gorski, Robert Harris, Alexander March, Katharine Sergava, Eddie Hodge and James Lane.

No Abbott production would be **the McCoy without Jimmy Lane. As for Miss Sergava, she is not** only a lovely ballerina, but a deft comedienne as well. We can only wonder why she hasn't been given more of an opportunity to display her good looks and talent.

If you want to laugh rush to the Adelphi immediately and buy your tickets for "Look, Ma, I'm Dancin'!" A fast, funny, zippy musical, it's destined for popularity and ducats will be scarce.

'LOOK, MA, I'M DANCIN'!'

Musical comedy conceived by Jerome Robbins; music and lyrics by Hugh Martin; book by Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee; settings by Oliver Smith; costumes by John Pratt; musical director, Pembroke Davenport; orchestrations by Don Walker; ballet arrangements by Trudy Rittman; direction and choreography by George Abbott and Jerome Robbins; presented by George Abbott at the Adelphi Theatre, Thursday evening, January 29, 1948. The cast:

Wotan	Don Liberto
Larry	Loren Welch
Dusty Lee	Alice Pearce
Ann Bruce	Janet Reed
Snow White	Virginia Gorski
Eddie Winkler	Harold Lang
Tommy	Tommy Rall
F. Plancek	Robert Harris
Tanya Drinskaya	Katharine Sergava
Vladimir Luboff	Alexander March
Lily Malloy	Nancy Walker
Mr. Gheb	James Lane
Mr. Forbish	Eddie Hodge
Tanya's Partner	Raul Celada
Bell Boy	Dean Campbell
Stage Manager	Dan Sattler
Suzy	Sandra Deel

SYNOPSIS—ACT I: Scene 1, Pennsylvania Station, New York City. Scene 2, On tour. Scene 3, A rehearsal hall, Joplin, Mo. Scene 4, On tour. Scene 5, Hotel room, Amarillo, Tex. Scene 6, Outside a theater, Phoenix, Ariz. Scene 7, Stage door of the Philharmonic Auditorium, Los Angeles. Scene 8, Back stage of the Philharmonic. Scene 9, Stage of the Philharmonic. ACT II: Scene 1, A railroad platform, Glendale, Calif. Early the next morning. Scene 2, A Pullman car. Scene 3, On tour. Scene 4, A theater basement, Des Moines, Iowa.

Journal American

JANUARY 30, 1948

A Good Original Idea But Just A Fair Show

By ROBERT GARLAND

Broadway and I—and you, too, I shouldn't be surprised—have been hearing about this "Look, Ma, I'm Dancin'!" for quite some little while.

Jerome Robbins was taken with the original idea a season or so ago. And, from then till now, Jerome Lawrence and Robert Lee have been assembling a libretto, to which Hugh Martin has been adding words and music.

Last night, Let-George-Do-It Abbott fetched the result of their four-sided collaboration to the Adelphi, to which have been added some settings by Oliver Smith, some costumes by John Pratt, some orchestrations by Don Walker, some direction by Mr. Abbott, who's also the producer, and some choreography of Mr. Robbins, who's also the original idea man.

Almost more choreography than Pembroke Davis, director of the orchestra, can shake his stick at. All sorts, all conditions of choreography: some so-so brilliant; some so-so lackluster; some just so-so. The most brilliant is the "Gotta Dance" which opens the evening. The most lackluster is the "Mademoiselle Marie," which closes the first stanza.

But, brilliant, lackluster or merely so-so, "Look, Ma, I'm Dancin'!" is first and last a ballet show, happiest when on its toes, doing the very thing it's making fun of.

• • •

Best on Toes

Kicking the ballet in the tights, as it's supposed to do, the new arrival is best when, taking its toe from its cheek, it permits the hero and the heroine to step out of character and, remembering Michael Kidd's "On Stage," dance the pas de deux from "Swan Lake"—alone! Then, Ann Bruce and Eddie Winkler are believeable.

As, down through a season or so, you've more than likely heard, "Look, Ma, I'm Dancin'!" has to do with Lily Malloy, the banker's daughter, who wants to be a ballet dancer but has no touch of talent for it. So, to offset her commonplaceness, she becomes the angel of the Russo-American Ballet Company of which Ann and Eddie are leading dancers.

But, according to the libretto assembled about Jerome Robbins' original idea, Lily is content to be no angel in the wings. She's bound to dance right out on the open stage, in public. This she does, rendering the title role of that "Mademoiselle Marie" ballet. In their Philharmonic Auditorium, the critics in Los Angeles adore it.

Not so the higher-minded members of the Russo-American Ballet Company, however. And with these unadoring dancers this lower-minded member of the Drama Critics Circle agrees.

• • •

Nancy Is a Help

On Nancy Walker's stalwart talents falls the larger part of the evening's acting. As Lily Malloy, on-stage angel of the touring terpsichoreans, Miss Walker is a help in every time of trouble. And when she lifts her raucous voice in "I'm the First Girl," "If You'll Be Mine" and "I'm Tired of Texas," all's right at the Adelphi.

Things aren't bad either while Harold Lang, who's Eddie, and Janet Reed, who's Ann, are dancing. When he stops to sing, you realize what a fine young dancer Mr. Lang can be. Anyway, it's Loren Welch who's entrusted with the serious singing. "Tiny Room" and "I'm Not So Bright," for instances. And a good seventh part of "If You'll Be Mine."

Alice Pearce, still being Lucy Schmeeler, is determined to be funny without much help from anybody. Virginia Gorski and Don Liberto fill in when their superiors are relaxing. The others carry on against Mr. Smith's mostly better backgrounds, quoting Messrs. Lawrence and Lee's mostly limp libretto, chanting Mr. Martin's mostly mediocre music...

Not unappreciative of Mr. Robbin's original idea, I hope that Ma, when lookin' at the dancin' doesn't expect much else from this new George Abbott offering. If she does, she'll be definitely disappointed.

The New York Times

JANUARY 30, 1948

AT THE THEATRE

By BROOKS ATKINSON

For the sake of humor they have turned the folklore of the ballet into a good knockabout musical comedy, "Look, Ma, I'm Dancin'!", put on at the Adelphi last evening. Reversing the usual sex arrangement, Jerome Robbins has "conceived" it, as the program explains, and George Abbott, the carnival maestro, has staged it with the authority of the old-school style in song entertainment.

Having nothing very serious on its mind, the book offers Nancy Walker as the stage-struck backer of a ballet troupe, and this is a fine dispensation. For Miss Walker, short and pugnacious, is the most versatile young clown in the business, and thoroughly professional.

* * *

Unlike most of her colleagues of the same age, she is an actress. She can move with the timing of a vaudevillian. Pushed around by the book as well as the other performers, Miss Walker is she who gets slapped. This is a very comical business, for she is constantly skipping nimbly through the book, and burlesquing vaudeville clichés when the book has nothing with which to help her.

The book is the work of Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee. Taking a group of young ballet dancers, it tours them around the country and carries them amiably through the romantic crises of the business. Hugh Martin has written some cheerful music to serenade them and the most ingenious lyrics of the season.

* * *

Some people in a state that shall be nameless are not going to like "I'm Tired of Texas." But everybody ought to like "I'm Not So Bright," which Loren Welch sings beautifully, and "The Little Boy Blues," which Virginia Gorski and Don Liberto translate into a nice show-shop enchantment. Although Mr. Martin is a modish tunesmith, he is friendly enough to write one song in simple rhythm, "Shauny O'Shay," which is a jaunty bit of fooling.

Although ballet is the subject, "Look, Ma, I'm Dancin'!" comes gratifyingly close to the old musical show formula with rhapsodic dancing in familiar idioms and ballets that are either festive or comic. The show begins with a high-stepping frolic and includes one episode of wonderful sky-larking in a Pullman car.

Alice Pearce, a chinless sprite with a humming-bird mind, tosses in some refreshing lunacies. As an ambitious ballet composer, Harold Lang is light on his feet and skillful with the innocuous plot lines, and Janet Reed is equally pleasant as his partner.

* * *

Having conspicuous talent for organizing troupes of young people, Mr. Abbott has assembled a particularly beguiling group of actors and dancers; and with Mr. Robbins' assistance he has brought them on and off the stage with pace, imagination and informal high spirits. Oliver Smith has provided some of his most useful and attractive settings on train platforms, streets and rehearsal halls. John Pratt has dressed the company in costumes that agreeably suit a lively occasion.

With original material, engaging actors and expert staging, "Look, Ma, I'm Dancin'!" brings us a top-drawer Broadway show. As an incompetent ballet aspirant with flat feet and a lantern-jawed map, Miss Walker is hilarious and the best slap-stick comedian of her generation.

The Sun

JANUARY 30, 1948

By WARD MOREHOUSE.

'Look, Ma' a Skimpy Show.

A good idea, that of satirizing the ballet, goes wrong in the new musical piece, "Look, Ma, I'm Dancin'!" which began to play last evening at the Adelphi. There's book trouble in this new one, and to such an extent a generally attractive company fails to make a show of it.

****

****

"Look, Ma, I'm Dancin'!" offers some excellent interludes. George Abbott and Jerome Robbins, one of the heroes of the current season, have devised an amusing first-act finale with the farcical ballet, "Mademoiselle Marie," which is fast and furious in the fashion of Robbins's "Mack Sennett Ballet." And the sleep-walking number called "Pajama Dance" is original and imaginative. But there are also points to be made against the Adelphi's new production.

The music and lyrics are pretty much on the routine side; the book is generally lifeless. There is a great deal of dancing—and good dancing—but perhaps too much. "Look, Ma, I'm Dancin'!" comes off as a show that is never quite as much fun as its creators thought it would be and intended it to be.

The diminutive, tough-talking Nancy Walker is starred. She plays a stage-struck brewery heiress who buys her way into the ballet by backing the Russo-American Ballet Company, which has its trials and triumphs in cross-America wanderings. Miss Walker is a brassy, aggressive comedienne; she is expert in her timing and is frequently very amusing in her belligerence. She was at her best last night in putting over a good and hearty song, "I'm Tired of Texas." But notwithstanding Miss Walker's frequently expert clowning her new show is one that sags and lags.

There are some extraordinarily pleasant people in the company. Harold Lang, now playing a dancer with yearnings to assert himself as a director of choreography, is nimble and attractive. Virginia Gorski is a bright performer in song and dance and is definitely an asset to the production. Janet Reed is lovely in the "Swan Lake" sequence. Don Liberto, Loren Welch and Katharine Sergava contribute zest to the proceedings, but Alice Pearce is an eccentric comedienne I find hard to take. Oliver Smith, the scenic designer, has supplied some attractive backgrounds and there are good costumes from John Pratt.

George Abbott and Jerome Robbins have put a good deal of time and labor into their new show, but a promising idea is wasted in a listless book. "Look, Ma, I'm Dancin'!" is skimpy and disappointing.

PM EXCLUSIVE

FEBRUARY 1, 1948

Kronenberger

A Joke About Ballet Falls Somewhat Flat

The most I can say—to be schoolmasterish about *Look, Ma*— is that it's one of the brightest children I've ever flunked. It's a fine might-have-been; possibly even a fine should - have-been. It has good things in it, good people all about it, a good idea behind it. But it's not a good show.

****

****

* * *

Nor is it that other, *High Button Shoes* kind of show – an upsy-downsy musical that's up at just the right moments and never down for long. *Look Ma,* I'm afraid, is never up for long. It's like a conversationalist who, between very brilliant remarks, is a good deal of a bore; and whose brilliant remarks come farther and farther apart. *Look, Ma* doesn't even save the best for last. Except for one fine dance number, the evening is really over at the intermission.

* * *

Jerome Robbins' idea—of a musical that should make copy of ballet at the same time it made fun of it—was a bright one; it left the way open for everything from the finest possible dancing to the funniest. The book idea—of a ballet troupe on tour, and of a rich brewer's less than flower-like daughter who enters the show by angeling it—was serviceable, too. Very serviceable, seeing that the brewer's daughter would be Nancy Walker. And with George Abbott to give *Look, Ma* the old wham and pace, and Oliver Smith the new look and shine, and Hugh Martin to write the music, and somebody good to write the book—and Mr. Robbins himself, of course, to work out the dances—it must have sounded fine. It sounds fine even now.

* * *

Well, the trouble is that the music's not good enough and the book's not good at all. The book flubs all its chances—its great chance to make something authentic of ballet-trouping; its smaller, more reasonable chance to make something gay and picturesque. It only succeeds in being dull; and there are times when, caught in its grip, Nancy Walker only just succeeds in not being. Miss Walker is a fine comic, and if I've found her more fun on other occasions, that doesn't

mean she was doing a better job. It only means the show was.

* * *

Mr. Martin's music and lyrics represent less than my idea of Mr. Martin's talent: except for the words of Miss Walker's first number, they're pretty routine, without much lilt or stylishness or wit. And, when a book hobbles, a score must do better than plod. Or so it would seem from *Look, Ma*, where some brisk Abbott direction and some very brilliant dancing do not countervail. Mr. Robbins gets the show off to a potpourri of dance styles; and his fresh, original sleep-walking ballet is the one real oasis in the second-act desert. He is less successful with his biggest try, a French-bedroom-farce ballet that winds up Act I. It shows the same hand as Robbins' superbly hilarious Mack Sennett ballet in *High Button Shoes*, and has moments almost as funny; but it lacks the same strict sense of pattern, the same marvelous sense of pile-up; and so is funny only by fits and starts.

* * *

A final big asset of the show is Harold Lang, as always an extremely agile and versatile dancer, and this time a very helpful leading man. Janet Reed, Loren Welch and others are helpful too; and the whole enterprise is of the right unhackeneyed kind. It's only fault is that it doesn't come off.

—Louis Kronenberger

New York Post

JANUARY 30, 1948

'Look, Ma, I'm Dancin'!' A Disappointment

By RICHARD WATTS JR.

Before entering into a discussion of "Look, Ma, I'm Dancin'!" the new George Abbott musical show, which opened at the Adelphi Theatre last night, I have two matters to explain. One is that the title is so difficult to write, what with its commas, apostrophes, exclamation point and all, that it will hereafter be referred to in this review as "Look" or "Ma." The other is that I am still of the conviction that Jerome Robbins is one of the most talented and imaginative men in the American theatre. Having made these points clear, I must go on to add that the show which he and Mr. Abbott ran up out of their preoccupation with the ballet struck me as almost steadily disappointing.

There are good things in it, three of which represent Mr. Robbins' commendable refusal to be stuffy about his pirouettes. At the end of the first act, there is another burlesque ballet in the Mack Sennett manner, which, if not as magnificently hilarious as his incomparable Keystone Cops number in "High Button Shoes," is still very funny. Then, in the second and better act, there are an engagingly delightful sleep-walking dance by the cast and a pleasantly romantic use of the "Swan Lake" thing, just to show what a tasteful and creative choreographer Mr. Robbins is even in his most casual mood.

Brewer's Daughter

On the whole, though, it is my guess that "Look" (or "Ma") represents one of those ideas which sound so wonderful when the sponsors are talking it over and then turn out to be something less than that in practice. The plan was to produce a gay, zestful and satirical show about the adventures of a ballet company touring the United States, with Nancy Walker prominently present as a brewer's daughter with serious dancing aspirations and enough money for her to be taken along as the show's angel. Unhappily it is not until the second act that the idea amounts to much, and then not enough.

I can at least report that I am on happier terms with Miss Walker than I used to be. There was once a ferocity about her which scared me almost as much as Olsen and Johnson can, but, in her current vehicle, she is not only unterrifying but quite engaging in an almost wistful fashion. She still strikes me as something less than a major performer, and I think that the task of carrying an entire show continues to be somewhat beyond her, but here she is both amusing and likeable.

Tired of Texas

Another impression of mine is that Hugh Martin's score is not as helpful as it might have been. The viewpoint of a number called, with admirable candor, "I'm Tired of Texas," is likely to make it more popular than its actual merits may warrant, and the agreeable "Shauny O'Shea" bears all the marks of a song hit, but, on the whole, the music sounded fairly routine last night. One reason may be that the cast is more expert at putting over its material by dancing than by singing.

Present in what is presumably a comic capacity is Alice Pearce, a sort of Three-Eye League Paula Laurence from the night clubs. It is my morbid and highly ungentlemanly suspicion that Miss Pearce's chief value to the show lies in the way she makes Miss Walker seem a prodigy of charm. Harold Lang plays and dances the role of the book's ungracious hero pleasantly. Janet Reed and Katherine Sergava help with the dancing and Virginia Gorski aids in the singing. But honesty forces me to confess my belief that the player who did the most to give "Ma" some much-needed attractiveness was the chorus girl who wore a narrow red ribbon in her hair and had a line which went "I had a lovely time at your party."

New York World-Telegram

JANUARY 30, 1948

Nancy Walker Antics Make Audience Dance

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

Nancy Walker is starred in "Look, Ma, I'm Dancin'," and just about time, too. She is one of that half handful of the world's funniest people. All she has to do is walk on the stage or open her mouth, and, as she would say, "Om dead."

In this she brushes off the cares of the world with the blunt sledge of her philosophy, sings with her familiar cagey humor and sly rhythm and dances her head off.

She has shuffled around to her own songs before, but here she leads a corps de ballet and fades it into the background with hilarious pantomime.

The Dying Swan.

In an outrageously funny French bedroom farce to music, she is a femme fatale beyond compare. She conceals an international honor guard about her room, and rebuffs interruptions with a strangely comic combing of her hair.

Later on she does an audition on her toes in a swan costume that makes her look like a closeup of a trapeze artist. Her brave bumbling and agonized gyrations should discourage any aspiring novice who has the sense of humor to see how cutting her satire is.

Playing the male lead is Harold Lang, who opens the show with a brilliant display of just about every form of dance known to man. Whenever he stands still, ostensibly to catch a breath, he starts singing in a fresh youthful voice.

Not Used Enough.

Mr. Lang dances again in the show's third number. Then he is oddly lost in the jumbled story, enacting an arrogant choreographer who wrangles when he might be dancing until the final number when he takes to the air again.

This seems typical of a strange misuse of talent, which particularly affects the appearances of Janet Reed and Tommy Rall.

As an actress Miss Reed gets along much better in the second half of the show, carrying on after a neat little drunk scene with finesse. As a dancer Miss Reed has conspicuously distinguished herself in modern character roles. Here her big scene is a rehearsal of the classic "Swan Lake," done half way through with no partner, and often interrupted.

She dances with efficiency, but the interlude is without rhyme, reason, or any particular enjoyment for anybody.

Mr. Rall, who can dance like the wind, appears briefly in an ordinary role of a bellboy, and later does a few competitive spins in a rehearsal scene.

The show has its ups and downs, whamming in terrific numbers when it can, through the shreds of a story that ends where it ought to begin. Roughly, Miss Walker is a brewer's daughter who buys her way into the company, and Mr. Lang wants to replace classic conventions with novelty and comedy.

Three of the first four numbers stopped the show last night. That springboard is hard to sustain.

Dancing in Their Sleep.

One of the freshest spots in the performance is a sleep-walking ballet in the middle of the second act. It is a delight, conceived with originality and gathering comic momentum to its finish.

Involved in this terpsichorean circus are Alice Pearce with her canary bird madness, and Loren Welch, who pleasantly sings some of the flatter sentimental songs. On first hearing, the score does not seem sensational, but for popularity our bets are on "I'm Tired of Texas" and "Shauny O'Shay."

Virginia Gorski and Don Liberto are a juvenile duo who sing and dance with professional pleasantry.

Footwork is the leading talent, as the title indicates. The ensemble is alert and agile, slender of body and quick on the uptake. "Look, Ma," is hardly 100 per cent perfection, but when it is gay it is good and gay, and who can quibble with any show that lets Nancy Walker behave that way?

NEW YORK Herald Tribune

JANUARY 30, 1948

By OTIS L. GUERNSEY JR.

Don't Feel Too Bad, Mom

THE new musical "Look, Ma, I'm Dancin'!" is shaped somewhat like a teardrop; it has most of its good numbers at the front end of the program, and George Abbott has streamlined it for speed and enthusiasm. Conceived by choreographer Jerome Robbins, it hangs its dozen-odd musical numbers in the story of a ballet company touring the nation under an impresario named "F. Plancek." The dance numbers fall within the area of broad burlesque, and the book, too, is less of a satire than a series of gags fed to the leading comedians between tunes. The gayety on the stage never lets up, but the show rarely tops itself after opening scenes in which Harold Lang kicks his heels in several rythms and Nancy Walker enters wrapped in furs and leading a Russian wolfhound on a leash.

• • •

The Messrs. Abbott and Robbins are very fortunate to have Miss Walker around. She swaggers through the Jerome Lawrence-Robert E. Lee book making even some of the straight lines sound funny. Hugh Martin's music is, for the most part, snappy but undistinguished, but Miss Walker sells some of it like a practiced and determined musical comedy pitchgal. She helps the show off to a good start in its second number, called "I'm the First Girl" and describing the plight of a mere chorus girl in a ballet troupe. As a matter of fact, only in this number does "Look, Ma, I'm Dancin'!" achieve what might have made it a bright new entertainment: a perfect blend of words, movement and music satirizing a ballet theme.

• • •

The Robbins choreography is disappointing. There is a sleep-walking pajama dance on a train that has style and humor—it happens to be in Act II, making the teardrop bulge slightly—but most of it gives the impression of sheer clowning rather than purposeful and graceful humor. The Act I finale, with Nancy Walker running about in a negligee, is something of a rat race, with more Abbott in it than terpsichore. Harold Lang, playing an ambitious young choreographer, dancing everything from a congo to a pas de deux and singing too, is an excellent leading man. He has a pleasant stage personality and great virtuosity, and is capable of doing much more than was asked of him in this show.

• • •

The ballads and ditties sung in one by Loren Welch, Virginia Gorski and Don Liberto are musically dull. This score needs the strength of a Miss Walker, or else of the whole company collaborating on "I'm Tired of Texas" (noting that that state is the rear end of the U. S. A.) and "Jazz," to bring it to life. Alice Pearce is on hand with some mild and squeaky jokes, and among the recognizable Abbott touches are the wolfhound, a telephone bit and two gags with blinders. "Look, Ma, I'm Dancin'!" never fails to keep up its high spirits, and some of them are justified. It is not the fault of Miss Walker, Lang and other capable performers if they gradually find themselves without very much to shout about.

DAILY NEWS

JANUARY 30, 1948

The Comical Brat Takes Charge Of Musical 'Look, Ma, I'm Dancin''

By ROBERT SYLVESTER

There was a funny little kid who used to hang around backstage at the Winter Garden when her pop had his act in the Olsen and Johnson shows and daytimes she would answer the casting calls. Any casting calls. She wasn't particular.

George Abbott had a casting call for "Best Foot Forward" and she answered that one. She sluffed across the stage, did a double take at the work light, and Abbott fell out of his chair. There was no role in "Forward" for her but he wrote one in. The kid was a riot.

Last night the same Mr. Abbott offered her as the star—name in lights and everything—of his new musical "Look, Ma, I'm Dancin'" at the Adelphi. Her name is Nancy Walker and she took hold of "Look, Ma" and batted it around as if she owned it.

This comical brat is simply loaded with talent. She looks a little like Ace Hudkins, the old welterweight fighter, but when she sings a ballad she is somehow real pretty. She can throw away lines with all the confidence of Bobby Clark or Frank Fay and if anybody will just give her a rhythm song she can rock every note and syllable out of it.

The Texas Grad.

She has one or two great moments in "Look, Ma, I'm Dancin," which probably is the clumsiest title ever saddled on a musical. She makes "Tired of Texas" one of the best comedy songs of any season and she does a burlesque modern ballet which is wonderful.

The new musical is by Jerome Robbins, which means that it is full of good dancing of all kinds whether ma is looking or not. It concerns the antics and misadventures of a lot of kids in a Hurokish ballet company and it has one or two superior songs by Hugh Martin and other Martin tunes which are above average.

Abbott, of course, can put sweaters and sparts shoes on a lot of kids and make them do more work than any producer in the business. This time he again has some lively and talented kids to make work. There is Alice Pearce, a very funny girl herself, with her squeaky voice and absurd hairdo. There is Harold Lang, a fine ballet dancer who previously proved he can handle musical leads. There are Janet Reed, Katharine Sergava and Tommy Rall from the legit ballets and there is Alexander March from the radio and the straight plays. There are various others, all of them pleasant.

Enough Slow Spots.

"Look, Ma, I'm Dancin'" has high spots which overbalance the dull ones, although it must be admitted there are plenty of the latter. By the time the show opened last night the book seemed to have been written (or maybe torn apart) somewhere between rehearsals and Philadelphia. The book is by Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee and this reporter sternly resists the temptation to speculate on whether or not Mr. Lee is the original.

Robbins, equipped better than anyone else to kid ballet as an art form, has a very funny act finale spoofing a non-existent ballet called "Mademoiselle Marie" but the highlight of his choregraphy is the second act "Pajama Dance" which is done in practically no stage space at all and builds to a really stirring conclusion. And he finds a way, just before the finale, to let Miss Reed and Lang do their "Swan Lake" pas de deux almost straight.

The Adelphi is much too big for a show of this type. "Ma" would doubtless look even better in a smaller theatre. And somebody better move it to one before the Walker brat tears out her throat.

"The Last Dance"

New York Post

JANUARY 28, 1948

Streamlined Strindberg Makes a Dull Drama

By RICHARD WATTS JR.

With deep humiliation I have to tell you that I have never read nor seen Strindberg's "Dodsdancen," upon which last night's opening at the Belasco Theatre, "The Last Dance," was based. Despite a frequent pretence of omniscience, I am forced to admit that I don't know just wherein the "freely adapted" version by Peter Goldbaum and Robin Short differs from, or adheres to, the original work by the Swedish misanthrope. But there is one thing which I can attest to with dogmatic certainty. The variation known as "The Last Dance" is a thoroughly bad and irritating play.

In one of the advance publicity stories I read that the first act of the adaptation closed at approximately the point reached by Strindberg at the end of his drama. Anyone who has regard for the reputation of the distinguished Swede should be pleased to hear this, because the first act is by far the best part of "The Last Dance." To be more specific, it is the first ten minutes which hold all the dramatic tension of the evening. In that period Oscar Homolka and Jessie

'THE LAST DANCE.'

Play freely adapted by Peter Goldbaum and Robin Short from August Strindberg's "Dodsdancen"; staged by John O'Shaughnessy; settings and costumes by Ralph Alswang; presented by James Russo and Michael Ellis under the sponsorship of Theater Associates, Inc., at the Belasco Theater Tuesday evening, January 27, 1948. The cast:

Edgar	Oscar Homolka
Alice	Jessie Royce Landis
Curtis	Philip Bourneuf
Judith	Anne Jackson
Alan	Richard Hylton

"The Last Dance"—*continued*

Royce Landis, as a military official and his wife living on a tropical colonial island, create a portrait of two people living in deadly hatred of each other which is filled with brooding menace.

Strindberg Idea

From what I do know of Strindberg, this ominous study of a man and woman, bored, embittered and neurotic, whose only conceivable pleasure lies in the possibility of driving each other to madness and death, is true to his best manner. It makes for a high order of dramatic suspense, too, as long as its savage mood can be properly maintained. But once a third character is introduced, and the husband and wife begin their struggle to dominate his somewhat feeble spirit, the interest is drained away.

In fact, after the first act, the only dramatic concern for this particular member of the audience lay in waiting for the disagreeable husband to come to the end of his days, which, it seems certain, is going to happen shortly before the final curtain. The reason for this morbid preoccupation is, not merely the hope it provides for the end of a play that has grown steadily more dreary, but also the certainty that "The Last Dance" is bent on closing with some ironic point about the almost equally disagreeable wife. I am sorry to say that, when the final irony is achieved, it isn't especially interesting.

Mr. Homolka

Many matters go wrong after the opening ten minutes, and I think one of them is Mr. Homolka's performance. As anyone who saw him in "I Remember Mama" and a couple of British motion pictures knows, he can be a highly effective actor, with a keen eye for vivid details. It is the details which get in the way of "The Last Dance." Indeed, he provides such an elaborate and highly colored portrayal that it is entertaining to watch, but it has very little to do with the play at hand. Wavering, as does the dramatization, between domestic tragedy and farce, it ends by being picturesquely grotesque.

Miss Landis has her characterization under soberer control, with the result that she is considerably more believable in her tormented bitterness and malice, but this is not one of her most convincing roles. Philip Bourneuf, another highly competent actor, is far from his best as the man whom husband and wife try to dominate, and the two juveniles haven't a chance. Perhaps the adapters were determined to show everybody that Strindberg didn't have to be the deadly serious old fellow he was supposed to be. But in the process of brightening him up they really did make him dull.

NEW YORK Herald Tribune

JANUARY 28, 1943

= By HOWARD BARNES =

Good Night!

SEVERAL competent performers have engaged in a lost cause at the Belasco Theater. "The Last Dance," which purports to be a free adaptation of an August Strindberg drama, is so incredibly dull that even such canny players as Oscar Homolka, Jessie Royce Landis and Philip Bourneuf are stopped dead in their tracks. Occasionally they whip up a bit of stage excitement by laughing when there are no lines to deliver or toying with small arms. They never make one believe that anything of consequence is unfolding in this Theater Associates, Inc., production.

* * *

The plain fact is that nothing does happen in "The Last Dance." Peter Goldbaum and Robin Short have written an enormous amount of windy dialogue about some unattractive people they have consigned to "a small, semi-tropical island which could be in the colonial possession of any country." There is considerable to-do about a venal military official who is skating on the edge of death. His wife and the doctor she loves get into the plot as well as a couple of youngsters who appear to be enamoured with each other by the gay way they swing tennis rackets.

* * *

The chief fascination about the show is waiting. For two acts a spectator might have expected that a slow fuse was burning on a piece of dramatic dynamite, certain to explode in its final stanza. There is no explosion. All that occurs is a particularly hammy death scene by Homolka and a nervous reaction by Miss Landis, as the wife with whom he lived and quarreled for twenty years. At least Miss Landis gives an indication that the material in which she is involved is nothing short of awful.

It is difficult to see why the authors, the actors and all the other collaborators in this dismal venture inflicted it on Broadway. John O'Shaugnessy, who acquitted himself so well in the direction of "Command Decision" has let "The Last Dance" sag at every situation. Bourneuf tries to make sense out of a few of the Goldbaum-Short line, but he rarely succeeds. Give a nod to the Ralph Alswang settings and costumes. They are easier to take than anything else in a woeful stage offering.

DAILY NEWS

JANUARY 28, 1943

Vivid Acting by Oscar Homolka Highlights Gripping 'Last Dance'

By JOHN CHAPMAN

From August Strindberg's "Dance of Death" Peter Goldbaum and Robin Short have made a fascinating play, "The Last Dance." As it was performed last evening at the Belasco with Oscar Homolka at the top of his form as an actor, it is a curiously gripping mixture of malevolence and humor—a comic tragedy which seems to do no disservice to Strindberg even with an ending which the great Swede did not write.

I don't know how "The Last Dance" might look with another company working under another director. Perhaps it would be a little too much of the mutual hatred of a man and his wife; it might be too relentlessly grim. But Mr. Homolka and Jessie Royce Landis play it, if not lightly, ironically; and there is just the right kind of support in the contrasting naturalness of Philip Bourneuf, Anne Jackson and Richard Hylton.

John O'Shaughnessy, who earned his first Broadway praise for staging "Command Decision," may be credited with another skillful and perceptive job of direction. He has projected the play on his own terms, and not on the drearily worshipful basis of presenting one of the master works of a master dramatist.

A Twister of Lives.

Strindberg wrote "Dodsdancen" in 1901, and it was of contemporary life. But the time of "The Last Dance" is 1910, and the setting is "a small, semi-tropical island which could be the Colonial possession of any country." Mr. Homolka is in command of the island garrison; Miss Landis is his wife, and they have been together so long upon the island that even their hatred has a touch of ennui about it.

To the island comes Mr. Bourneuf as the new, energetic health supervisor — the man whom Miss Landis perhaps could have, and should have, married 20 years ago. She already knows, and he begins to learn, the utterly baleful and acutely guileful character of a little despot. This man himself, she explains, is empty inside; his life comes from interfering with, playing with and even misshaping the lives of other people.

Mr. Homolka is a superlatively gifted character actor, and he has put all his resources into an astonishing portrait of the husband. He is gross, but cunning; he flies into rages—and one of his rages takes him off with a heart stroke—but he has sardonic humor. And his is the last laugh—for even in death his hold upon his wife is firm: her hatred and fear of him are all that is left her to live by.

Satisfying Switch.

This ending is the adapters', not Strindberg's. Strindberg's husband, reviving after a stroke, begged forgiveness. The new conclusion is, I think, satisfying and correct, and dramatically forceful.

Miss Landis is admirable—a bored, yearning wife in whom grows the awful determination that only by her husband's death can she be freed. Mr. Bourneuf plays the health inspector quietly and easily as he, too, falls victim to clever machinations. And there are very good performances by two young players—Miss Jackson as the tempestuous and calculating daughter of the husband and wife, and Mr. Hylton as Mr. Bourneuf's sensitive, decent son.

Ralph Alswang, who seems to be Broadway's scenic artist for January, has designed two nicely contrasting settings—the major's fortress and the sunny and pleasant residence of the health supervisor.

The New York Times

JANUARY 28, 1948

Oscar Homolka Appears in 'The Last Dance,' Adapted From a Play by Strindberg

By BROOKS ATKINSON

Using a Strindberg play as their source-book, Peter Goldbaum and Robin Short have drawn the portrait of a heel in "The Last Dance," which was acted at the Belasco last evening. The original Strindberg play was "Dodsdancen," which he wrote in 1901. Not having studied it, this department cannot report the nature of the surgical operation the adaptors have performed. But there seems to be quite a lot of the Strindberg ferocity left in the old patient yet.

For "The Last Dance" is a meticulously detailed study of a hateful, sadistic army officer who destroys everyone he encounters—first his wife, then his best friend and his best friend's son, and he almost destroys his own daughter before she has presence of mind enough to destroy him.

* * *

Especially in the acting of Oscar Homolka, Jessie Royce Landis, Philip Bourneuf and Anne Jackson, there is a certain fascination in this analysis of evil. It is deliberate and candid in the writing—naturalism without artifice or perspective. Strindberg had more trouble with women than with men. But "The Last Dance" pours his fury on one man, who was a monstrosity. After an evening of such virulence, is it permissible for a theatregoer to match Strindberg's simple bitterness with simple dislike? For "The Last Dance" does not derive from ideas or poetry, and there is no artistic originality in the play. Apart from the vehemence of Strindberg's hatred, there is no significance in it.

Having decided to stage it, the producers have had the courage to put it on well. Mr. Homolka, a veteran Strindbergian, plays the malicious army officer with appalling verisimilitude. Acting in a bravura poster style, a little larger than life and infinite in detail, he conveys the whole surface of the character—the piggishness, grotesqueness, coarseness, anger, cunning and vanity. If you want to know how an old-school army officer puts on a dress uniform, you are directed to Mr. Homolka, who devotes the whole third act to combing his mustache, pulling on his boots, tightening the cinch over his belly and struggling into the tunic.

* * *

A more fastidious player, Miss Landis gives a sharp, economical and perceptive performance of the officer's wretched wife, who is not exactly free of guile in her own right. Mr. Bourneuf ably describes the character of the friend—the character development expressed in reverse from confidence and cheerfulness to disillusion and disgust. Anne Jackson, as the daughter, acts with spirit all the way through and gives an extraordinarily vibrant performance in one big scene in the last act. As the boy she loves, Richard Hylton contributes an acceptable performance.

John O'Shaughnessy, who staged "Command Decision," has staged "The Last Dance" intelligently also, though with less cohesion in the last act when the evil is dissipated in the detail. Although Ralph Alswang's first act setting is a little puzzling, his sun-lit scenery for a tropical island in the last two acts is imaginative and buoyant.

Nearly everyone has conspired to give "The Last Dance" an engrossing hearing. But Strindberg's impulsive hatred for his principal characters makes his play poisonous in the theatre. No matter what Mr. Goldbaum and Mr. Short may have done to "Dodsdancen," "The Last Dance" is hard to love and admire.

The Sun

JANUARY 28, 1948

By WARD MOREHOUSE.

A Bleak, Tropical Evening.

"The Last Dance," a bitter fable of a monster and a meddler, flickers only occasionally as exciting drama; it follows a struggling course and is far from being satisfactory theater. Peter Goldbaum and Robin Short are the authors, adapting their play from Strindberg's "Dodsdancen." The first performance was given last evening at the Belasco.

"The Last Dance" is done with five characters. It's all about a vicious, crafty, tyrannical military man who rules his mean little world on a semi-tropical island in the year of 1910. He has been married for twenty years to a woman who is almost his equal in cunning and treachery. They are sick of each other and of their lives, and they present, as we first meet them in their quarters inside an old fortress, a study in stifling and gnawing boredom.

An old friend, whose own marriage was disrupted by them fifteen years before, comes to the island as health supervisor. He is confident and able and has plans and ideas, but the scheming Major goes to work. The supervisor soon loses his job and his authority and his elaborate living quarters, which are taken over by the monster. The Major finally meets the end foreseen for him early in the first act, but his death comes as a hollow victory for the wife, who had been planning on it for all these years. She despised him heartily, but she is lost without him.

Oscar Homolka makes a character of the squat, fiendish military hypocrite who engages in endless intrigue in his tiny island kingdom. Jessie Royce Landis contributes a showy and frequently fascinating performance as the woman who yearns for a release from the Major, but who is somehow completely under his spell. Philip Bourneuf gives quiet, restrained playing as the decent man who becomes a haggard wreck under the plottings and ruthlessness of the post commander.

Ralph Alswang is a scenic designer who likes these tropical settings and he has supplied two good ones. John O'Shaughnessy has brought more vitality to the direction than the authors (plus Strindberg) did to the writing.

"The Last Dance" is a bleak and cumbersome drama of frustration in the semi-tropics.

Journal American

JANUARY 28, 1948

An Over-Acted Play On Trivial Conflicts

By ROBERT GARLAND

In "The Last Dance," occupying the Belasco, you can't see the play for the acting. Seldom, on a mid-Manhattan stage, have so many personal performances transpired concurrently.

From Oscar Homolka, who tops the billing, to Richard Hylton, who bottoms it, through Jessie Royce Landis, Philip Bourneuf and Anne Jackson, who're in between, each actor's busy acting.

The play you can't see for that acting is a "free adaptation" from August Strindberg's "Dodsdancen," known to earnest English-speaking students of the drama as "The Dance of Death."

Peter Goldbaum and Robin Short, who come from Germany and Manitoba by way of film and radio, are the "free adapters." James Russo and Michael Ellis are the brave producers.

On behalf of Theatre Associates, Inc., they—the brave producers—have done nobly by the Strindberg-Goldbaum-Short collaboration. More nobly than need be.

Nowadays, with worldwide confusion and unrest to fret about, the horrid little hates of the horrid little haters at the Belasco are antics in an anthill.

A 'So What?' Play

Always, to me, has this Scandinavian "modern classic" been a "So what?" play. Suppose Edgar, Alice and Curtis, Judith and Alan, do feel that way about themselves and one another?

Suppose, somewhere on a "small, semi-tropical island which could be the Colonial Possession of any country," Alice does hate Edgar because she loves him? And, of course, vice versa?

Suppose, as I read in hefty volumes written by my betters, "nobody ever does get anywhere" in this "most hopelessly pessimistic of all the August Strindberg plays"? So what?

At the Belasco, in the mouths of Mr. Homolka, Miss Landis and Mr. Bourneuf, beneath the direction of John O'Shaughnessy, before the settings of Ralph Alswang, it just doesn't matter.

Try as I do, the small sadistic crimes and punishments of the Strindberg-Goldbaum-Short little people leave me where they find me. That's in an uneasy orchestra chair on 44th st.

This sort of made-to-order grease-paint suffering went out,

"The Last Dance"—*continued*

I'd hoped, when the Atomic Age came in. It, too, should have died at Hirohima. I'm not so sure it didn't.'

• • •

Uninhibited Acting

The directing Mr. O'Shaughnessy is the one who directed "Command Decision" with rightness and restraint. But he's overwhelmed by the uninhibited histrionics of Oscar Homolka.

As Edgar, beloved of Alice because she hates him, Mr. Homolka combines much that is most typical of Bobby Clark, John Carradine and the death bed scene in "I Remember Mama." This takes doing!

Jessie Royce Landis, in the face of all this acting, is impressively restrained as Alice. When the going gets over-tough, she plays her own accompaniments on a small upright piano.

Philip Bourneuf, as the thankless Curtis who's loyal to Edgar because he's in love with Alice, is as good as he can be in so triangular a situation. The ART didn't hurt him.

Richard Hylton is an on-coming young performer as Alan. So, in a less unquestionable way, is Anne Jackson as Judith. Ralph Alswang's settings and costumes are handsome.

But, even in its new "free adaptation," August Strindberg's "Dodsdancen" is a museum piece from an almost forgotten theatre world.

PM EXCLUSIVE

JANUARY 29, 1948

Kronenberger

Compressing the Life Out of Strindberg

In fairness to *The Last Dance*, I must begin this review on a personal note. Just before I started for the opening, I began to ail; but it being pretty late to fetch a substitute, and hoping I'd soon feel better, I set forth. Unfortunately, the jouncing of the taxi put the finishing touches on a truly notable bilious attack, and I for I sat through an evening of Strindberg in a state of misanthropy that Strindberg himself would have envied. I can claim to have been fairly attentive; I have no way of knowing whether I was really receptive. Since in spite of my affliction I liked things here and there, I'd judge it wasn't only because of my affliction that I disliked *The Last Dance* as a whole. But consider this a merely provisional report; I'll try to catch the show again in a day or two and offer more undoubted testimony.

• • •

I've never read Strindberg's *Dodsdancen*, but I believe its two parts add up to two full-length plays: which Peter Goldbaum and Robin Short have "freely adapted" into one. This might seem a way of thickening and intensifying its drama; but actually *The Last Dance* suffers from virtually never being dramatic enough. It lacks narrative interest, it lacks climactic development. It even lacks a kind of continuity—the telescoping of two plays into one leaves an impression of dropped stitches and missing links. The whole thing would seem to have a play in it somewhere but no play comes out of it.

• • •

All that comes out with any vividness are two characters—a hateful couple who hate each other. The husband, a military man, is a kind of monster who spends his life ruining other people's. The wife, whatever she might have been in happier circumstances, is no charmer in these, and lives chiefly to see her none-too-healthy husband dead. The home life of this pair is truly striking and Strindbergian—even though the drama's most famous misogynist has for once dealt more ferociously with a man than with a woman. But *The Last Dance* very soon and very fecklessly concerns itself with the monster's other victims. It fails to become either good drama or good melodrama; and by weaving no spell, makes the incessantness of the man's villainy a trifle comic. There is a sardonic ending—but it only makes a point about the wife; it doesn't

Oscar Homolka brings plenty of zest to his portrayal of the husband and with a hundred small touches makes the part seem vivid; he far less often makes the part seem real. Jessie Royce Landis plays the wife with zest, too. Philip Bourneuf is adequate in a role that hardly admits of anything more; and if the remaining two roles are badly acted, they also seem badly drawn. Mr. O'Shaughnessy's staging is so-so; Mr. Alswang's sets quite effective.

—Louis Kronenberger

New York World-Telegram

JANUARY 28, 1948

Mean Couple Gyrates Through 'Last Dance'

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

For real repulsiveness in a family it would be hard to top the domestic pair in "The Last Dance." There is not a grace shared between this Edgar and Alice, who live by choice in a dreary, emotional cesspool.

Next to deliberately irritating one another, their favorite sport is dragging other people down to their level.

There is no dramatic power in the play to relate their viciousness to more familiar profligacy. It remains as remote and artificial as the carefully unidentified island on which they live.

Alcohol and Laments.

They exist in a moldy fort, the quarters drawn by Edgar as a peacetime military commander of 1910. He stays in a drunken stupor which is ravaging his heart, and Alice likes to sing to her own piano accompaniment while she bewails a lost career.

Their only potential friend is Curtis, returned after 15 years as administrator of a health project. Alice warns him that her husband will come to life as a combination leech and vulture, consuming new prey. This is hard to take seriously, as she quickly uses her music to spur Edgar into a drunken jig which almost finishes him.

Curtis is too decent a fellow to conceive of their monstrous devilry. Before long he finds his son in the army against his will, his quarters taken over by Edgar and his whole project subjected to military control with all his plans being exploited by the sobered officer.

Strange Ending.

Curtis is just saved the necessity of finishing off his verminous adversary, and Alice is left delivering her dead spouse an embarrassing invitation to a parade.

The part of Edgar is a carnival for an actor, and Oscar Homolka, no novice at portraying tropical decadence, plays it very well. The idea is to create a despicable character, and he makes you feel that if you were on stage you would gleefully take any opportunity to jolt that rotten old heart out of commission.

He is evasive, surly, complacent and slimy. Much of his time he spends grinding his body sluggishly around in a chair. He has an indefatigable hyprocrisy that can be infuriating, and his collapses are entirely convincing.

Martinet in Full Braid.

One long scene is meticulous and fascinating as he dons full dress uniform while he casually disposes of all the lives around him.

Jessie Royce Landis has the thankless task of making believe she would live with this revolting oaf for 15 years. Particularly in the first act she achieves this with a slovenly flippancy. Here she is a careless woman with flashes of meanness and no strength or ingenuity.

Later she reads impossible lines with what amounts to frank admission that no one could be expected to talk that way. It is probably as good an attack as any.

Other Roles.

Philip Bourneuf plays perfectly straight and quite effectively as the upright victim who at best is the plaything of a family of tarantulas.

Anne Jackson is the voluble daughter whose traits can be traced back one generation with ease, and Richard Hylton is a younger victim as hoodwinked as his father.

Daily Mirror

JANUARY 28, 1948

'Last Dance' Opens At the Belasco

By ROBERT COLEMAN

August Strindberg hated marriage and the human race. And he particularly hated women. His flaming hatred was captured in a number of bitter, cruel plays, among them "The Death Dance" and "The Vampire."

Peter Goldbaum and Robin Short have telescoped these plays into a free adaptation called "The Last Dance." Ironically, a woman fares better than a man in it and at the end a Strindbergian victim is in the mood to give marriage another chance.

In the Goldbaum-Short version at the Belasco, Edgar is a gross, portcine Army major stationed in a semi-tropical colony. He has a weak heart and a strong desire for booze. He is in debt and merely tolerates his shrewish wife. He avoids his neighbors, as they avoid him.

Then to the island colony comes Curtis to establish a health service and hospital—the same Curtis who had introduced Edgar to his wife Alice. The slothful Edgar comes to life and plots Curtis out of his job and attractive house.

The better to keep a grip on the unfortunate Curtis, Edgar lures his friend's son Alan into the army. But his nefarious plans backfire on him, and, during a tantrum, he passes out with a heart attack. Learning that both Edgar and Alice had taken a hand in wrecking his marriage, Curtis determines to try to patch up the pieces again.

The two plays do not weld convincingly. It is difficult to believe that so lazy and disliked a person as Edgar could summon the energy and assistance necessary to further his own fortunes and wreck those of Curtis. His is, to say the least, an unbelievable and poorly motivated renaissance.

The Strindberg characters are interesting in a morbid way, but they are not sufficiently developed on stage. Too much of what they do happens offstage and is merely talked about, given to the audience second-hand. The result is a play that flares occasionally into gripping drama, but not often enough.

Oscar Homolka is a grumpy, grimy, hoggish Edgar, apparently what Goldbaum and Short conceived him to be. Jessie Royce Landis, as the cunning, ruthless, spiteful Alice, makes the most of the few effective moments given her. Philip Bourneuf plays Edgar sympathetically, without rant or roar. Anne Jackson and Richard Hylton do well by other roles.

James Russo, Michael Ellis and Theatre Associates, Inc., have given the play a solid production, which includes direction by John O'Shaughnessy and sets by Ralph Alswang.

But we wonder why they did not choose instead to revive "The Father" or "Countess Julie." Both are superior to "The Last Dance." The current occupant of the Belasco may intrigue students as an example of Scandinavian dramaturgy, though we believe it will repel Mr. and Mrs. Average Playgoer. We doubt that it will dance long on Broadway.

"The Gondoliers"

Journal-American

JANUARY 27, 1948

D'Oyly Carters Shine In a Typical Opera

By ROBERT GARLAND

To even so ill-informed, so half-hearted a Savoyard as I, "The Gondoliers" is the most typical of the Gilbert and Sullivan collaborations.

Not the most brilliant, certainly. Or the most tuneful. Or even the most amusing. But, as their last, long get-together, it is more exactly what you would expect from them than any of its predecessors.

With their final break-up around the corner, the boys from the Savoy were content to fall back on their well-worn formulae. A shred of every W. S. Gilbert mockery is in the piece's words; a patch of every Arthur Sullivan melody is in the piece's music. There are intervals when you wonder if its players have strayed into the wrong opera.

But, before you can say "Patience," "Pinafore" or "The Pirates of Penzance," or, more often than any one of these, "The Mikado," those players are back in Venice or Barataria. And the Brothers Palmieri, as gallant gondolieri, are wooing, winning and all-but-losing the young, the fair, the amiable contadine named Tessa and Gianetta.

"The Gondoliers," or "The King of Barataria," never quite gets lost in the made-over mazes of its saying and its singing. Not at the Century, at any rate.

* * *

Keep Songs in Hand

Up near Central Park, the visiting D'Oyly Carters keep songs and situations in hand. As if afraid of "going Broadway" on the rapt Savoyards composing the congregation, they are prone to understress "The Gondoliers," to throw away, as show business puts it, some of the W. S. Gilbert mockery and the Arthur Sullivan melody.

Last night, when this typical one about the King of Barataria made its debut as the latest item on our visitors' diminishing list of Gilbert and Sullivan reproductions, the entire first act was too deliberately played down. Not until the locale changed from Venice to Barataria did the D'Oyly Carters actually snap into it.

But, once in Barataria, the gondolieri, the contadine, even Don Alhambra del Bolero and the Duke and Duchess of Plaza-Toro, let their hair down and a good, if genteel, time was had by all. Not to be left behind holding his baton, Isidore Godfrey, the conductor, openly urged his pitmen to play right out loud in public.

In consequence, the latter of the two stanzas was by far the brighter. Reticence is a good thing, but you can get too much of it. I did.

* * *

Bitten by Encores

Until again bitten by the encore insect, Martyn Green was at his easygoing best as the Duke of Plaza-Toro, with Ella Halman as his Duchess. And when reminded that "musicians are sordid persons who always expect to be paid in advance," his, and his lady's, "How like a band!" brought down the house. Times never really change!

As the Brothers Palmieri, Leonard Osborn and Charles Dorning were personable. Casting aside their Venetian shorts as gallant gondolieri, the royal robes of Barataria became them. And the songs and sentiments to match.

Gwyneth Cullimore and Denise Findlay were Gianetta and Tessa, their sweet and chirping girl-friends.

Richard Watson said and sang the role of the Mikado of Japan all over again as the Grand Inquisitor. Which is what Gilbert and Sullivan demand.

His "tale so free from every doubt, all probable, possible shadow of doubt" was perfection. And the others, almost every one of them, were right up there on-stage, seriously Savoyarding...

Too, too seriously for the first part of the evening. But, from intermission on, "The Gondoliers" came spontaneously into its own as the most typical of Savoy collaborations.

'THE GONDOLIERS.'

Opera written by W. S. Gilbert; composed by Arthur Sullivan; staged by Anna Bethell; scenery and costumes by Charles Ricketts; musical conductor, Isidore Godfrey; presented by the D'Oyly Carter Opera Company of London at the Century Theater, Monday evening, January 26, 1948. The cast:

The Duke of Plaza-Toro.....Martyn Green
Luiz.....Thomas Round
Don Alhambra Del Bolero.....Richard Watson
Marco Palmieri.....Leonard Osborn
Giuseppe Palmieri.....Charles Dorning
Antonio.....Eric Hutson
Francesco.....Thomas Hancock
Giorgio.....Radley Flynn
Annibale.....Richard Dunn
The Duchess of Plaza-Toro.....Ella Halman
Casilda.....Margaret Mitchell
Gianetta.....Gwyneth Cullimore
Tessa.....Denise Findlay
Fiametta.....Enid Walsh
Vittoria.....Jean Gillingham
Giulia.....Laura Cromble
Inez.....Caryl Fane